

Edward M. Richards House,
Dedham, Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-258

HABS
MASS.

11- Ded

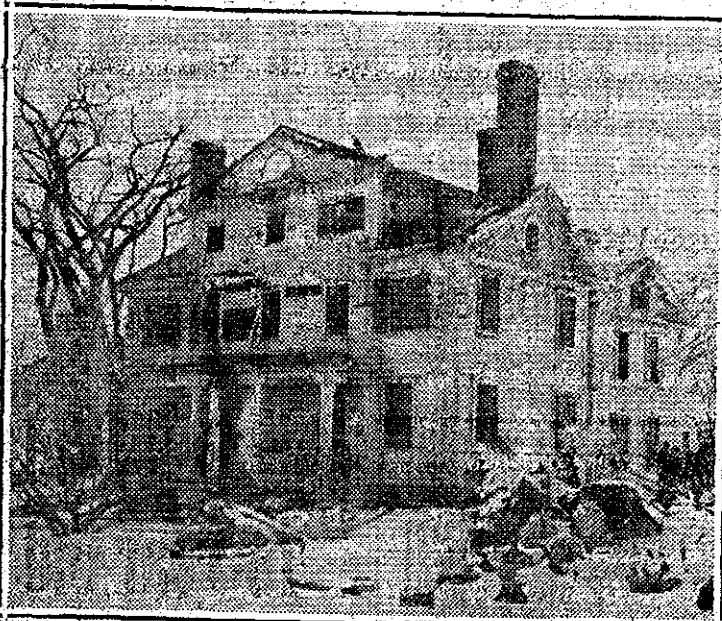
4.

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Massachusetts
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey (Fed.)
Frank Chouteau Brown, District Officer
141 Milk Street, Boston, Mass.

OLD DEDHAM INN PREY OF FLAMES

Seven Flee as Blaze, Believed Set,
Sweeps Hostelry Built in 1791;
Dog Perishes; Loss \$25,000



INN DAMAGED BY FIRE

This is the scene of the blaze at the Dedham Inn. The structure was built in 1791 and was designed by Charles Bulfinch, famous architect.



HALLWAY OF INN SWEEPED BY FIRE

This picture shows the interior of the famous Dedham Inn, where blaze raged yesterday.

General alarm in Dedham yesterday may have been set swept through the historic old Dedham Inn on Court street, Dedham, early yesterday, causing damage in excess of \$25,000, forced seven persons to flee for their lives and took the life of a pet dog.

AWAKENED BY SMOKE

The blaze was discovered by George Thorley, owner of the inn, which was built in 1791, who was awakened by smoke. Rousing his wife, Magdeline, 55, and his two daughters, Barbara, 24, and Magdeline, 22, he called to a friend, Frank Howard, 48, of Natick, a visitor at the inn for the night. Howard tried to get up the third floor stairway where two other guests, William Murray and William Magnuson, were sleeping. When smoke drove him back, he shouted to them and they managed to get down the stairs. Murray was captain of the Harvard 1919 football team.

With the entire seven assembled on the second floor hallway, Howard attempted to lead the way down the front stairs, but was met by a sheet of flame. The group then turned and headed down a rear flight to safety. Barbara's pet cocker spaniel, "Penny," which had been sleeping in her room, could not be found and had to be abandoned.

Second Alarm Sounded

Racing through the snow and ice in his bare feet, Howard sprinted a quarter of a mile to the nearest fire box and pulled the alarm. With the arrival of Fire Chief Henry Harrigan, a second alarm was immediately sounded, bringing all available apparatus in Dedham to the scene. The old timbers were consumed so quickly, however, that firemen, hampered by cold, could not check the flames, and the structure was completely destroyed inside, leaving only the four walls standing.

At the height of the blaze and before firemen arrived, a neighbor, Wendell Burdick, 31, made an attempt to get inside the inn and rescue the dog but he was forced to give up before he had gone more than a few feet beyond the front door.

Blaze Started in Cellar

The flames gutted the interior so badly that Chief Harrigan and Inspector Edward Murtagh of the State fire marshal's office, who was called into the investigation, had a hard time finding the source of the fire. It was finally agreed that the blaze started in the cellar. The cause was undetermined but Chief Harrigan said last night that he planned to ask Inspector Murtagh to continue his investigation today.

Built in 1791, the inn was designed by Charles Bulfinch, the most famous architect of his day, who drew the plans for both the old and new State Houses, Faneuil Hall, the Old North Church, the United States Capitol at Washington and many other churches, banks and private homes in New England.

Many Paintings Destroyed

Contained in the building were half a hundred oil paintings which were the work of Mrs. Thorley, a well-known artist. One piece alone was valued at \$1500. All were either consumed by the flames or badly blistered so as to render them worthless. Clothing and all possessions of the Thorley family and guests were lost and they were forced to put up at neighbors' houses yesterday.

Thorley, the owner of the inn for the past 12 years, said the building would have to be torn down. His daughter, Barbara, who conducted a kindergarten in the inn, had not made any plans up to last night for the continuance of her teaching.

One of the few works of art which may be restored when the building is demolished is a fireplace faced with top fable tile which was brought from England on a dinner ship.

HABS
HASE
H-DED
4-

MONDAY, **THE BOSTON HERALD**
RUINS OF FAMED DEDHAM LANDMARK



The historic Dedham Inn on Court street, Dedham, destroyed by flames in an early morning fire yesterday. The structure was designed by Charles Bulfinch, colonial architect, and was built in 1791.

Historic Dedham Inn Destroyed; Spaniel Warns Occupants, Dies

Josephine, a stout-hearted cocker spaniel, died of suffocation yesterday, but not until her barking had aroused the occupants of the historic Dedham Inn on Court street, Dedham, before it was destroyed by flames. Damage was estimated at \$20,000.

Mr. and Mrs. George Thorley, proprietors of the inn, were awakened by the barking of the dog. They aroused their daughter, Barbara Ann, and three guests, and all fled to safety in their night-clothing.

A general alarm brought the entire Dedham fire department to the scene, but the flames gained such headway that firemen were unable to prevent them from sweeping from the cellar to the roof. The interior

was damaged so badly that the walls will be torn down.

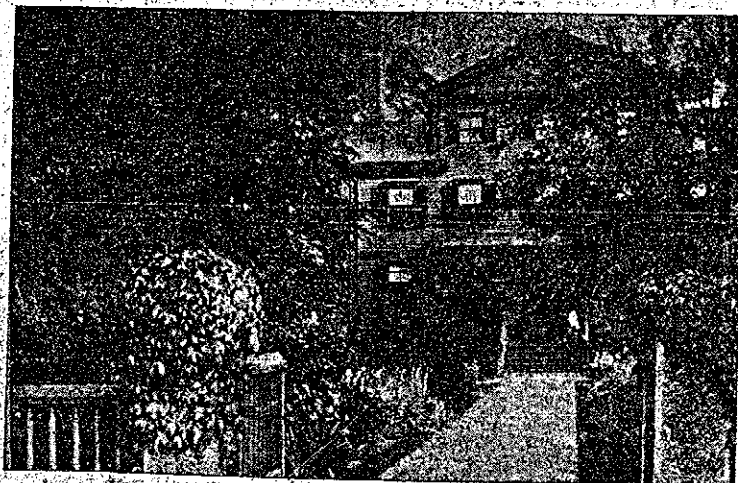
Thorley risked his life in a vain attempt to find his dog, but the smoke prevented him from reaching a second floor room, where the dog's body was found later. Fire Chief Henry J. Harrigan said he believed the blaze started from an overheated furnace.

The original structure was built as a private home in 1791, and was designed by Charles Bulfinch, the colonial architect. The home remained in possession of the Richards family, its original owners, until 1918, when it was enlarged and made into an inn.

French troops commanded by Gen. Lafayette used land adjoining the building for a camping ground during the Revolution.

Ancient Town Landmark
Is Destroyed By Flames

Ancient Town Landmark Is Destroyed By Flames



General Alarm Called As Fire Sweeps Dedham Inn

Old Richards Home Was
Designed By Bulfinch

Seven persons were forced to flee for their lives early Sunday morning when a general alarm fire swept through the historic Dedham Inn at the junction of Court and Highland streets. Several firemen were slightly injured in battling the blaze, and a cocker spaniel, the property of George Thorley, owner of the inn, died of smoke inhalation.

Thorley, a member of the Dedham Board of Assessors, was awakened by smoke about 3.30 a. m. He aroused his wife and daughters, Barbara and Magdaline, who warned William J. Murray and Joseph Magnuson, roomers, and a guest, Frank Howard of Natick. All seven attempted to go down the front stairs but the flames turned them back and they escaped down a rear stairway.

Howard had some difficulty in locating a fire alarm box and finally sounded an alarm from box 67, corner of Court street and Village avenue. He pulled down the lever and instead of letting go of it, held it momentarily, thereby confusing the sounding of the whistle. But at the fire stations the tappers registered the proper number.

General Alarm Sounded

When the firemen arrived, they found the Highland street side of the two and one-half frame dwelling a mass of flames. Chief Harrigan immediately ordered a general alarm, bringing all available apparatus to the scene. The firemen laid nine lines of hose to the burning building, but the old timbers were dry, and the firemen, hampered by cold, slippery ladders and icy conditions, found it almost impossible to check the flames. The front part of the structure was completely destroyed inside. Damage is estimated at \$15,000. The cause of the blaze is undetermined. Chief Harrigan and Inspector Ed-

(Continued on Page Three)

(Continued from Page One)

ward Murtagh of the State Fire Marshall's office made an investigation and it is believed the fire started in the front hallway of the house.

Inside the building were a number of oil paintings, the work of Mrs. Thorley. All were either consumed by the flames or badly blistered. Clothing and other possessions of the Thorley family, the roomers and guest were lost. After the fire was extinguished, Murray, captain of the Harvard 1919 football team, entered the house and recovered his wallet, which was undamaged though all his clothing had been destroyed. Murray is district supervisor for the National Youth Administration and had been residing at the inn for some time.

Try to Save Dog

When informed by Thorley that the dog was in the building, Deputy Chief John B. Hartnett and firemen, William Henderson and Fred Mahern, made a desperate attempt to save the animal. They even lifted the couch, under which the dog was later found, but the smoke in the room was so dense that lanterns and flashlights were of little use.

After being forced to flee from the building the occupants found refuge in the Burdakin home, next to the inn. Battling the flames under adverse conditions, the chilled firemen welcomed the hot coffee and sandwiches served them by Mr. and Mrs. Wendell Burdakin. Police officers also made several trips from a nearby restaurant to the fire with coffee and doughnuts.

Tuesday the Thorleys were making their temporary home with Mr. and Mrs. Patrick H. Liberator at the junction of Court and Washington streets.

History of the House

Charles Bulfinch, Colonial architect whose masterpieces include the Capitol in Washington, the old and new State Houses in Boston and many other noted buildings, is believed to have designed the house. Authorities point to the treatment of the facade, particularly the pediment, and a harmony of line which was typical of Bulfinch's buildings. Further proof lies in the fact that Mrs. Arthur Thayer, whose great grandfather bought the house soon after it was built, states that in her family, who occupied the house for 114 years, it was an accepted tradition that Bulfinch was the designer.

Historic deeds point to the fact that the house was probably built in 1791. The year previous the lot of land was sold to John M. Lovell for 86 pounds. Two years later, in 1792, Lovell sold the land, with the house thereon, to Samuel Brock, Jr., for 576 pounds. The house undoubtedly explains the sudden increase in price. The house passed into the hands

of John Madey, who sold it for 800 pounds to Alexander Hodgdon in 1795. It was purchased from his widow in 1803 by Samuel Richards, great grandfather of Mrs. Thayer.

Samuel Richards, known as "Blind Samuel," was a Boston hardware merchant. When he lost his eyesight, he returned here to his native town. His son, Edward Metcalf Richards, who later came into possession of the house, married Rebecca Guild in 1827. In later years she used to tell her descendants that when she was married and came to live in the Richards house, twenty stage coaches passed daily each way over Highland street between Boston and Providence, many of them stopping at the Gay Tavern, directly across the street.

The house was large, and here for many years the Richards family used to gather. In 1873 the entire rear of the house was torn down and replaced by new additions. Although the front facade was not changed, the roofs over the two front wings were heightened. As a result, much of the former symmetry, shown in early pictures of the house, was lost. In 1918 the house was sold to Edward Gamell and turned into an inn. It was later purchased by George Thorley.

Edward Richards, who died in 1865, was noted as a horticulturist. He experimented extensively on the transplantation of trees from foreign lands, and was known particularly for his fruit trees. He was a vice-president of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and the gardens which surrounded his home were especially notable. The large beech tree, still standing, was set out by him almost a hundred years ago.

HABE
MASS
11-DED
4-

Norfolk

Robert M. Morse